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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6876
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHJA/ISLAMIC CONFERENCE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1465
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1948
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1038
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003042

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DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, DRL, DRL/IRF
INR FOR CHARLIE ZENZIE
NSC FOR EPHU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [PHUM](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: INDONESIAN ISLAMIC SECT AL-QIYADAH FACING
PERSECUTION

REF: JAKARTA 2878

Classified By: DepPol/C Daniel E. Turnbull, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The leader of Al-Qiyadah--a small Islamic sect labeled "deviant" by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI)--turned himself in to Jakarta police earlier this week. Police have largely managed to prevent vigilante attacks on sect members, despite intense pressure from local MUI branches and radical Islamic groups. Some local governments are preparing to ban the sect and may bring charges of blasphemy against its leaders, while others claim to have moderated adherents' beliefs. The campaign, which has parallels with the treatment of the banned Ahmadiyah sect, has the potential to tarnish Indonesia's record on protecting religious freedom. END SUMMARY.

UNDER PRESSURE, "PROPHET" SURRENDERS

12. (C) On October 29, Achmad Moshadeqq, the leader of Al-Qiyadah, surrendered to Jakarta police along with six of his followers. Moshadeqq is a Jakarta native and former trainer for the Indonesian Badminton Federation who in July declared himself a prophet after spending 40 days and nights meditating at Mount Bunder near Bogor, West Java. An Al-Qiyadah leader told us that Moshadeqq has decided to surrender in order to save his community from attack. Dozens of other Al-Qiyadah followers have reportedly entered "protective custody" across the country.

13. (C) Pressure against Al-Qiyadah mounted after MUI, an important national group of Muslim religious leaders, issued a fatwa (religious edict) accusing the sect of heresy in early October and urged the government to ban the sect's teachings (reftel). The sect is considered deviant because it does not require daily prayers, fasting or the hajj pilgrimage but still claims to be within the Islamic tradition. The edict has prompted numerous demonstrations against the group and at least one attack on property owned by Moshadeqq in Bogor. The sect is estimated to have a few thousand followers in Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi and is particularly popular among students. Radical groups opposing the sect, such as the Muslim Defenders Team and the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), allege the group's strength exceeds 40,000.

14. (C) In what smacks of a witch hunt, MUI members in Palembang, South Sumatra province, have suggested that two university students who reportedly have been failing to pray five times per day might be sect members. In Lampung province on the southern tip of Sumatra, two elementary school teachers--a husband and wife--accused of proselytizing for the sect have been suspended. In Bandung and Surabaya, Al-Qiyadah and other sects which MUI is investigating, including the Al Qur'an Suci, have been accused of kidnapping university students.

15. (C) Anxiety with the sect is widespread: moderate Muslim organizations have also expressed concern over its practices.

In some areas, however, local communities claim to have reached accommodation with Al-Qiyadah. Press contacts in West Sumatra indicate the local MUI branch is advocating against the detention of Al-Qiyadah members who have agreed to return to "the true path."

BALANCING ACT

16. (C) Police have taken action both to prevent attacks on the sect and to appease hard-line groups which have threatened to suppress the sect themselves if police are not up to the task. Dozens of arrests have already been made across the country but no charges have been brought. On October 30, National Police Chief General Sutanto reportedly instructed provincial police chiefs to contact and question Al-Qiyadah leaders and specified that followers not be investigated. Jakarta police subsequently announced that followers who had turned themselves into police would be released but would be required to report to police twice a week.

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17. (C) Some local governments are reportedly preparing to ban the sect. On October 31, Jakarta Governor Fauzi Bowo announced that he agreed with a recommendation from the Jakarta Prosecutor's Office to ban Al-Qiyadah but was still coordinating the matter with the local police and military commands. A contact within the Attorney General's Office, Thomson Siagian, said that other local governments were likely to follow Jakarta's lead but cautioned that prosecuting sect leaders on charges of blasphemy--which carries a maximum 5 year sentence--would only be possible if the sect's activity continued after a ban was in place.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION REQUIRED

18. (C) Former President Gus Dur has argued against banning the sect on the grounds that freedom of thought and expression are guaranteed by law. He has suggested the problem should instead be tackled by a supervisory board for minority faiths that consists of the Police and the Ministries of Religion, Justice and Interior (PAKEM). Gus Dur rejected the notion that MUI or other Islamic groups be allowed to take the matter into their own hands. In the past, however, the government has avoided public confrontation with extremist groups and may prefer to let local governments deal with disturbances. Without decisive action by the central government, however, Al-Qiyadah members are likely to face continued persecution.

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